

Message Text

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53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-04 FRB-01

INR-05 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-06 SP-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5299

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LOPEZ DEFENDS HIS ADMINISTRATION AND ATTACKS
FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO

REF: BOGOTA 9095

1. DURING SWEARING-IN CEREMONIES OCT 15, 1974 FOR THE
NEW RECTOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, LUIS CARLOS PEREZ
PRESIDENT LOPEZ MADE A STRONG DEFENSE OF HIS ADMINISTRATIONS
PHILOSOPHY AND ACTIONS. HE ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPLY
TO FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO, WHO IN THE FIRST
ISSUE OF LLERAS NEW WEEKLY NUEVA FRONTERA CHARACTERIZED
LOPEZ USE OF ECONOMIC EMERGENCY POWERS UNDER ARTICLE 122
OF THE CONSTITUTION TO INITIATE FISCAL REFORM MEASURES AS A
DANGEROUS PRECEDENT. LLERAS EMPHASIZED THAT HIS OPINION WOULD
NOT CHANGE WHETHER OR NOT THE SUPREME COURT RULED THE MEASURES
CONSTITUTIONAL.

2. LOPEZ STATED THAT UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION COLOMBIA WAS
ENTERING A NEW ERA OF LIBERTY WHICH CARRIES CERTAIN RISKS
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BECAUSE QUESTIONS ARE BEING RAISED ABOUT THE "WISDOM OF

THOSE, WHETHER POLITICAL BOSSES, ECONOMISTS, OR PHILOSOPHERS (LLERAS FITS INTO ALL OF THESE CATEGORIES) WHO HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THEY WERE THE ONLY ONES WITH THE RIGHT ANSWERS". HE SAID THAT SINCE HIS ADMINISTRATION WAS NEW IDEAS, AND A DESIRE TO BRING ABOUT REAL CHANGE, MISTAKES WOULD BE MADE. HE SEEMED TO WEIGH THE POSSIBILITY OF MISTAKES AGAINST THE REBIRTH OF FREEDOM THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS BROUGHT TO COLOMBIA. HE REMINDED HIS AUDIENCE THAT HE HAD GRANTED FREEDOM TO THE COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CSTC) AND HAD NAMED WOMEN TO POSITIONS OF IMPORTANCE IN GREATER NUMBERS THAN EVER BEFORE. HE PROMISED A RETURN OF FREEDOM TO THE UNIVERSITIES. LOPEZ REITERATED HIS INTENTIONS TO RESPECT THE AUTONOMY OF THE CONGRESS AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES, AFFIRMING THAT THE TIME HAS PASSED IN COLOMBIA WHEN THE PRESIDENT COULD CONTROL EITHER.

3. IN HIS MOST POINTED REFERENCE TO LLERAS, LOPEZ SAID THAT HE WOULD RESPECT THE DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT CONCERNING THE ECONOMIC EMERGENCY MEASURES. "I PREFER TO ACCOMPANY THE SUPREME COURT IN WHAT MIGHT BE AN ERROR...THAN TO PERSEVERE WITH WHAT I MIGHT CONSIDER MY OWN RIGHTNESS AGAINST THE DECISION OF AN INSTITUTION WHICH I PLEDGED TO DEFEND AS PART OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF COLOMBIA". (COINCIDENTALLY, THE SUPREME COURT RULED THAT FOUR MEASURES INITIATED BY LOPEZ UNDER THE ECONOMIC EMERGENCY POWERS WERE CONSTITUTIONAL, THE MOST IMPORTANT BEING THAT THE CONDITIONS CITED BY LOPEZ IN DECLARING THE ECONOMIC EMERGENCY COMPLIED WITH THE REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN ARTICLE 122 (REPORTED SEPTEMBER)).

4. COMMENT: IN HIS CIRCUMSPECT MANNER, LOPEZ HAS CONFRONTED THE ONLY SERIOUS CHALLENGE AND CRITICISM MOUNTED AGAINST HIS USE OF ARTICLE 122. WHILE BUSINESS AND LABOR GROUPS HAVE GRUMBLED ABOUT SOME OF THE MEASURES INITIATED BY THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION, ONLY LLERAS AND A FEW LLERISTAS IN THE CONGRESS HAVE MOUNTED ANYTHING NEAR TO A SUSTAINED CRITICISM, PRIMARILY BASED ON THE QUESTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF USING ARTICLE 122. YET, THE LLERAS INITIATIVES APPEAR TO BE AT LEAST AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITICAL AS SUBSTANTIVE, AND PROBABLY MARK THE NEAREST THING TO A BEGINNING OF MANEUVERING WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY FOR THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN.
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